

This monthly article highlights one of our branch members. We hope that you enjoy knowing a little more about your fellow members and the interesting life they have had. If you have someone you would like to nominate or if you would like to help author an article, please email the editor, Ron Nakamoto, at ron.nakamoto@yahoo.com.

ED "EDDY" WHITE



“Bleep, bleep, bleep” ... the sound of Sputnik was heard at first, very faint, breaking the vast static of space. Then, louder and louder those beeps confirming that Sputnik was in orbit and operational. Sputnik 1 was a small, polished metal sphere, with four external radio antennas broadcasting radio pulses. At 134 miles perigee, above the earth, it was readily visible in the sky. “I heard about it on TV (we had only one TV station with poor reception) as well as read about it later in the newspaper and magazines. One commentator stated that ‘The future belongs to the Aerospace Engineer ...’ and I was hooked. “This was Ed White’s recollection of that moment in history that forever influenced the rest of his life. *(Editor’s note: On October 4, 1957, Sputnik 1 became the first artificial Earth satellite launched into orbit around the earth. The success of the Russian “Sputnik” was*

convincing and dramatic proof to people around the world of the real prospects of space travel. This single event dramatically accelerated the U.S. space program.)

Ed was born and raised on a small poultry farm in Ohio near the Kentucky/West Virginia border (Hatfield and McCoy country). “My father was a first-generation farmer and my mother was a farmer’s wife. My grandfather was a pipe-fitter working for the railroad. I believed at that time an engineer was the man who drove the train. I spent my early years working on the farm. When I was free I enjoyed hunting and fishing. I was a Boy Scout and enjoyed camping and other field trips.

“While in college I was selected for an Astronaut study in preparation for the Apollo Moon landing. In early 1962, shortly after Kennedy gave his ‘We shall go to the Moon in this decade ...’ speech, the University of Cincinnati Psychology department was awarded a NASA contract to study the long- term effects of flying and confinement in a simulated Moon Mission. I was selected in the first group of three from over 300 applicants. The selection process was based mainly on psychological testing. (In my case, I believe they were looking for the characteristics that closely matched that of a chimpanzee. To this day, I refuse to have my genome tested for fear that the truth would be discovered that I am 45% chimp, 45% hillbilly and 10% Neanderthal.) We spent most of our time dealing with various simulated emergencies, usually in the middle of the night and were subjected to psychological and dexterity testing daily. The highlight was sampling and commenting on the astronaut food prepared by Beatrice Finkelstein, the astronaut’s dietician. *(Editor’s note: Dr. Beatrice Finkelstein was the first US research*

nutritionist and astronaut dietitian.) I recall many of the meals tasting like plaster-of-paris except for the applesauce. *(Editor's note: John Glenn was the first US astronaut to consume an extraterrestrial meal of applesauce on the third manned Mercury mission in 1962.)*

"I received my Aerospace Engineering degree from the University of Cincinnati and went on to work for McDonnell Aircraft in St. Louis, MO. I worked on the Gemini spacecraft performing structural analysis for the vehicle. (Editor's note: The Gemini spacecraft was a two-man pod designed for on orbit rendezvous and docking for the Apollo Moon Mission.) After several years, I joined Hughes Aircraft in Los Angeles; CA. Hughes was a pioneer in satellite, sensor, space control and communication systems so I was happily challenged for the next thirty-one years. Along the way, Hughes granted me a fellowship and I received my Masters in Aerospace Engineering from UCLA.

"My normal work activities included space vehicle design, dynamics and controls, mission analysis, launch support, operations, software development and test, hardware testing in both prelaunch and on orbit testing. I published a paper on "Stability of a Dual-Spin Satellite in a Gravity Gradient Field". The thesis and paper were published in the 1969 Journal of Aeronautics and Astronautics. The paper outlined the various stability conditions where Lyapunov stability could be satisfied. (Editor's note: The layman's definition of this condition is incomprehensible unless you are an advanced mathematician/physicist.)

"After retiring from Hughes, I worked for Scitor Corp. for the next twelve years and provided consulting support to various classified customers. I then decided to provide consulting services from my own company and did so for the next six years. About the only things I can say openly is that I was titled a Hughes Senior Scientist and later a Site Manager at the Blue Cube (Onizuka AFB). I worked in the Los Angeles area, the SF bay area, Denver, Chantilly, VA and Jakarta, Indonesia. The Indonesia program I worked on was memorable as it allowed me to see much of the world traveling to/from work and on vacation. The Indonesian islands in the Java Sea were great for scuba and snorkeling. One island- Pulau Putri - had thatched huts, a basic dive shop and one restaurant. There were no cars on the island. I would frequently take the full day to snorkel around or swim to an adjacent island. The only animals I saw were large lizards (4-5 feet) called Biowaks. Most islands were uninhabited. I loved the isolation and felt free.

"While, I was still single, on a whim, I did a bicycle trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles. It took a week along Highway 1 and I did it just to do it. I met Lilian on a bicycle ride in Sunnyvale. She worked for HP as a financial analyst and was part of an organized bicycle outing. I tagged along and we chatted along the bike trail. We went on our first date to a local steakhouse. After a courtship of four years we were married. We have been married for some thirty years and have one daughter and two grandchildren. Our daughter is a Human Relations manager at Stanford and our son-in-law has his own Internet business.

"We enjoy traveling and have taken many memorable foreign vacations. We cruised the Yangtze River, visited the Great Wall, Shanghai, Xian (where the Terra Cotta warriors reside), Beijing, and travelled through the locks of the Three Gorges Dam and other interesting sites. In 2012, we took a safari to Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and visited South Africa. While working or retired, I have been to most of the world continents except for South America and Antarctica. We have also travelled extensively to many places across America. When I transferred from Virginia to Sunnyvale we decided to drive Route 90, the northern route, and visited Badlands National Park in South Dakota, Devils Tower in Wyoming, Little Big Horn in Montana, Yellowstone, Mt. Rushmore and other interesting places around America. We will be taking a cruise in January 2018 from Santiago, Chile around Cape Horn to Buenos Aires.

"I began bowling in March 2015 with SIR shortly after retirement. I am currently bowling in two leagues with a 191 average in the serious "scratch" league and a 180 average in the fun "baseball bunch" league. The fun league is one where at the end of the season we all attend a Giants baseball game with tickets, transportation, food and drinks as our prize for the season. Like most of us, I bowled some forty years ago but today's game with its many styles and equipment makes it a fun and a challenging experience. I have six bowling balls for their different reactions to various lane conditions. My highest score was 279 (out of 300) and my highest series was 718.

"Regarding my exceptional personality characteristics, I have been told by friends/co-workers/relatives that I have the personality of a clam, the personality of a stone, no personality, and that I am very strange. I am very proud of these positive traits. Lots of people are strange, but being very strange makes me unique. I am presently making the leap to join the Intergalactic community as my present studies involve Interstellar Alien visitation. I am quite fascinated by this topic and am beginning to believe that we are not alone. I have done quite a bit of reading on the subject. Even Carl Sagan is said to have stated late in life, something to the effect that '... with recent discoveries on how readily life can begin, it is not unreasonable to expect that there might be one million civilizations in our galaxy alone, more advanced than us. Although we do not have the technology for Interstellar travel, there is nothing scientific which would prevent others from doing so. '

"My final thought is I am an example of the adage that a man who enjoys his work never works a day in his life. I have pursued my passion and have, for the most part, really enjoyed my work. So, one should really pursue their passion."